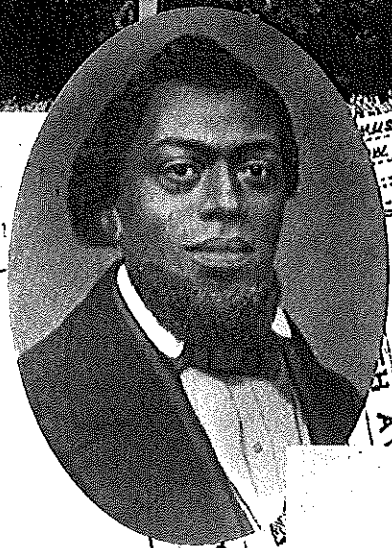
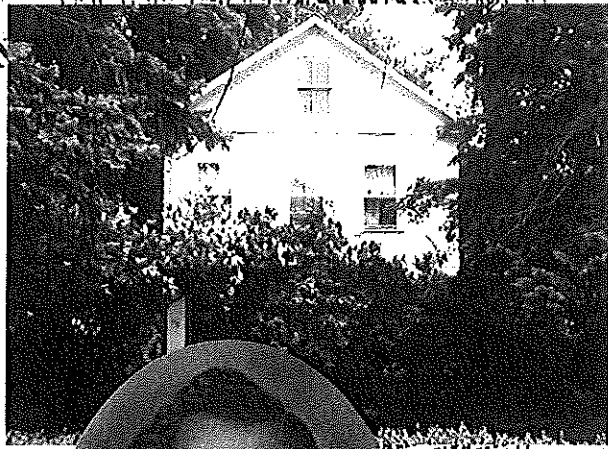


# EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY

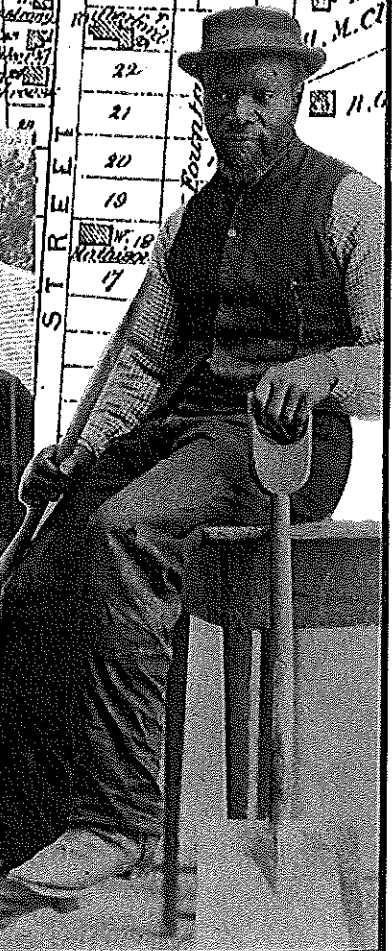
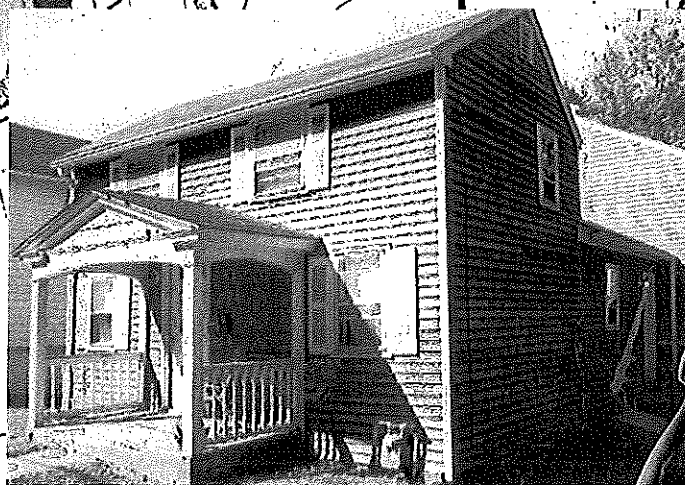
An African American Neighborhood • Middletown, Connecticut • 1847-1930



## Research Report

PROJECT HISTORIANS

Janice P. Cunningham  
Elizabeth A. Warner



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Funding for this project was made available by the Connecticut General Assembly as part of the Connecticut Freedom Trail program. The Connecticut Freedom Trail identifies, documents, and commemorates the contributions and accomplishments of Connecticut's African Americans.

# **EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY**

## **An African American Neighborhood Middletown, Connecticut 1847-1930**

### **Research Report**

#### **PROJECT HISTORIANS**

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2002

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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

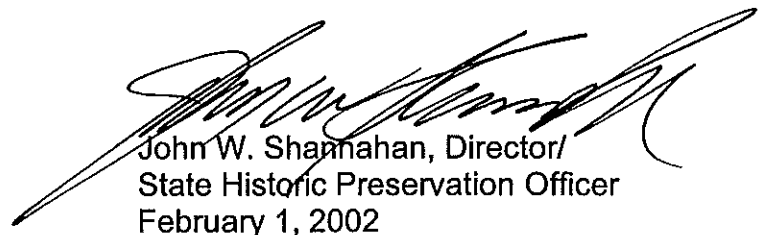
### Foreword

Connecticut is increasingly celebrating its African American heritage throughout the state. Recognizing the importance to Connecticut of numerous sites associated over time with the history and movement towards freedom of African American citizens, the General Assembly in 1995 authorized development of a thematic trail entitled the Connecticut Freedom Trail. Included are buildings reputedly used as stops on the Underground Railroad, sites associated with the *Amistad* human rights case of 1839-1842, and gravesites, monuments, homes, and other structures representative of the concept of freedom so cherished in the American mind.

The Connecticut Historical Commission has compiled professional research materials as the basis to enroll sites on the Connecticut Freedom Trail, to list them on the National Register of Historic Places, to publish educational booklets and guides about them, and to install historic markers to commemorate (1) the Underground Railroad in Connecticut, (2) the role of African Americans in the state's military history from colonial times to the present, (3) the African American experience during Connecticut's participation in the Civil War, and (4) the abolition and Civil Rights movements.

I am pleased to present the research report entitled *EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOOD, MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT, 1847-1930*, researched and written by Project Historians Janice P. Cunningham and Elizabeth A. Warner. Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Warner are both well-established authors and each has more than two decades of experience in researching Connecticut's rich architectural history. Their report documents the first known residential subdivision in the state, 1847, to have been laid out by a free black man for black homeowners. Leverett C. Beman (1810-1883), son of an abolitionist preacher and grandson of a slave, developed a neighborhood where other African Americans could own property and build homes. The report also contains information about more than 150 African Americans living in Middletown in the nineteenth century.

I commend Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Warner on an outstanding project which makes a strong contribution to the scholarship of Connecticut's African American past.



John W. Shanahan, Director/  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
February 1, 2002

## INTRODUCTION

This study report summarizes the development of a significant African American neighborhood in Middletown, Connecticut, and assesses its historical relevance in the context of state and local black history. The research was designed to find answers to some important historical questions. Chief among them was this experiment in community a planned development? Did its creation improve the lives of the residents in any material way? And finally, what were the views of the Middletown community at large? Unfortunately this last question remains unanswered; newspapers of the day rarely commented on the lives of black citizens.

In tracing the history of the neighborhood, the authors consulted a wide range of source material. Data recovered from Middletown city directories, land and survey records, manuscript censuses, newspapers, and a series of historic maps was compiled and cross-referenced. In the process, some information was obtained about the lives of more than 150 African Americans who were residents of Middletown during the time frame of the neighborhood. The volume of material precludes its inclusion in the body of the report, but their names and pertinent biographical data are recorded in list form in the appendix. In addition, because the neighborhood is potentially threatened with demolition, care was taken to fully research and document each historic house with photographs. Buildings are referenced by name and/or address in the text, but for the convenience of the reader, a list of all neighborhood buildings, past and present, with building histories is also included in the appendix.

## EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY

*We are taught here to have more faith.... I thank God that I have lived in these grand and awful times.*

---- Leverett C. Beman, 1879  
A.M.E. Zion Church

In these few well-chosen words, Leverett C. Beman (1810-1883), son of an abolitionist preacher and grandson of a slave, captured the essence of the nineteenth-century African American experience. In emphasizing the fundamental connection between life and faith, Beman acknowledged how the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Middletown had sustained the black community through those troubled times.

Three generations of the Beman family had participated in the long slow march from slavery to citizenship. Along the way, there were many milestones to celebrate and obstacles to overcome. Leverett's grandfather, Cesar Beman, fought in the American Revolution to gain his freedom, but, under the state's gradual manumission laws, slavery as an institution did not end in Connecticut until the early 1800s. As leaders in the black abolitionist movement in the state, the Bemans led a successful petition drive in 1847 for black suffrage, which was passed by the General Assembly, only to see it defeated in a statewide referendum. Dedicated to the end of slavery in the South, in 1863 they rejoiced in President's Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and were dismayed by the Dred Scott decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court. Four of Leverett's neighbors joined Connecticut's volunteer black regiments in 1864 to help bring the Civil War to its successful conclusion. And finally, Beman himself had lived to see constitutional amendments adopted after the war to abolish slavery and define the rights of minorities to due process and suffrage.

Despite all these achievements, freedom was a mixed blessing, and full equality remained an elusive goal. Access to employment and education was limited, suffrage was often denied, and for most African Americans, available housing was often substandard, and few were able to own property. The plight of free blacks in the North was largely ignored by white abolitionists, but Beman and other black leaders worked to improve conditions. While other members of his family were founding state and national organizations, Leverett Beman had a more modest goal. His experiment in community, a Middletown neighborhood where blacks could own their own homes, was founded in 1847. The organization of a free-black community by an African American was highly unusual and may prove to be unique in Connecticut. That it endured against all odds for almost 80 years is a testament to Beman's vision and faith.

The annexed plot represents a piece of Land as surveyed and divided for Mr. L.C. Beman City of Middletown, Ct. April 10, A.D 1847. Giswold C.S.

For the whole — Commence at S.E. angle  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet Easterly from the S.E.  $\angle$  of L.C. Beman's House, in line with the S. end thereof — thence,

S  $58^{\circ}$  W — 16.72 Rods, to  $\angle$  near brook  
 S  $71\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  W — 13.76 " — to S.W.  $\angle$  of Roads  
 N  $17^{\circ}$  E — 8.68 " — to N.W.  $\angle$  of Widow  
 N  $20\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$  E — 42.10 " — to N. point at Roads  
 S  $7\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  E — 21.79 " — to  $\angle$  in Road  
 S  $27\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$  E — 14.56 " — to S.E.  $\angle$  of Commencement.

A3. 0. 31.

CROSS STREET  
 (partially)

Areas A. = 80 Square rods. A. 2.00

B. --- 58. ---	--- 0. 1. 13
C. --- 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ ---	--- 0. 0. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$
D. --- 42 $\frac{1}{4}$ ---	--- 0. 1. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$
E. --- 40. ---	--- 0. 1. 00
F. --- 45. ---	--- 0. 1. 5
G. --- 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ ---	--- 0. 0. 38 $\frac{1}{2}$
H. --- 22.55 ---	--- 0. 0. 22 $\frac{1}{2}$
I. --- 181.57 ---	--- 0. 1. 17
J. --- 77. ---	--- 0. 1. 37
K. --- 40. ---	--- 0. 1. 00
511.5	A3. 0. 31.5

Illustration 1. Map, Neighborhood plot and survey, drawn for L.S. Beman, April 10, 1847. Map A-6, Middletown Town Clerk's Office, Middletown, Connecticut.



## NEIGHBORHOOD ARCHITECTURE

The residential neighborhood developed by Leverett Beman occupies a narrow triangle of almost five acres. Now located on the western edge of the Wesleyan University campus, it once marked the boundary between the City of Middletown and its rural hinterland. The triangle is bordered on the east by Vine Street (formerly Park Street), on the west by Knowles Avenue (formerly Vine or Swamp Street), and on the south by Cross Street (Ill. 1). The land rises steeply on the other sides of Vine Street and Knowles Avenue. Mature trees scattered through the neighborhood provide a background for houses on the north end of Vine Street and line Knowles Avenue.

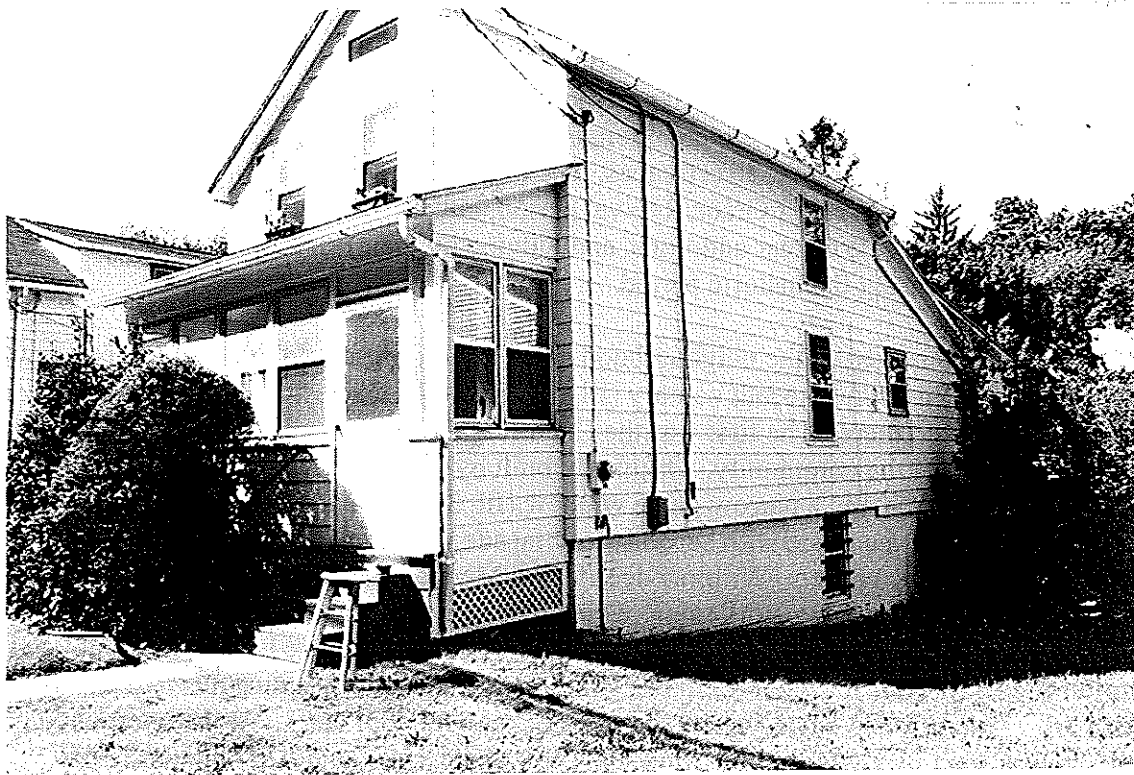
The neighborhood today consists of 18 houses built between c. 1840 and 1959 and includes the A.M.E. Zion Church, which was moved to this site on Cross Street in 1921 and replaced by a new building in 1981. The only commercial building occupies a lot at the corner of Cross and Vine Streets. It was erected in 1921 and remodeled in the 1980s. Nine of the existing 16 historic houses were built between 1840 and 1890; the remainder between 1904 and 1947. Two modern houses were added to the neighborhood in 1959, one on Knowles Avenue (#134), the other on Cross Street (#168). Over time several historic houses were demolished, including the home of Leverett Beman, the site of the present store, and a 1848 house that once stood on the church site on Cross Street. Remodeled in 1889, it served as the A.M.E. Zion parsonage until the 1980s. At least one nineteenth-century house was replaced in the early 1900s on Knowles Avenue (#12-14).

While the architecture as a whole is vernacular in character, some houses also exhibit touches of the Queen Anne or Colonial Revival styles in front or side porches (Ill. 2). Most of the historic houses are wood frame with gable roofs and brick foundations and many retain original window sash. The buildings vary in height, with smaller cottages interspersed amongst two-story houses. But even on taller houses, some second stories are not full height and several main blocks are only one-room deep. Gabled facades are common, but a few cottages have a ridge-to-street orientation, which adds variety to the streetscapes. On Vine Street several front-facing gables have the lower pitch more typical of Greek Revival period, but only one was actually built at that time. All the houses have side or rear additions, and judging by their brick foundations, many were original or added during the historic period.

Vine Street, the best preserved of the neighborhood streetscapes, presents a long continuous row of houses built mainly in the nineteenth century (Ill. 2). Two of the oldest buildings in the neighborhood are located there. The first was the Cambridge-Camm House (#9), which predates Beman's development of the community. Originally built by Ebenezer Deforest about 1840, it has an enclosed front porch and a narrow gable window (Ill. 3). Next door is the 1848 Isaac B. Truitt House (#11; Ill. 4), a cottage with second-story façade windows tucked under the eaves and a later Colonial Revival porch. Within a decade, the Menominee L. Miami House was erected to the north at #21; its two-story wing, which more than doubled the size of the building, and the Victorian porch were added after the Civil War. Four houses were built at the south end of street after the Civil War: the George Snipes House, a gabled cottage with a nicely preserved front porch at #7 (Ill. 10), and a two-family, double-decker next door at #5. At the north end, a rental cottage was built by Bartholomew Murphy at #19 about 1870, and #23, another rental property, was added at the apex of the triangle in 1904.



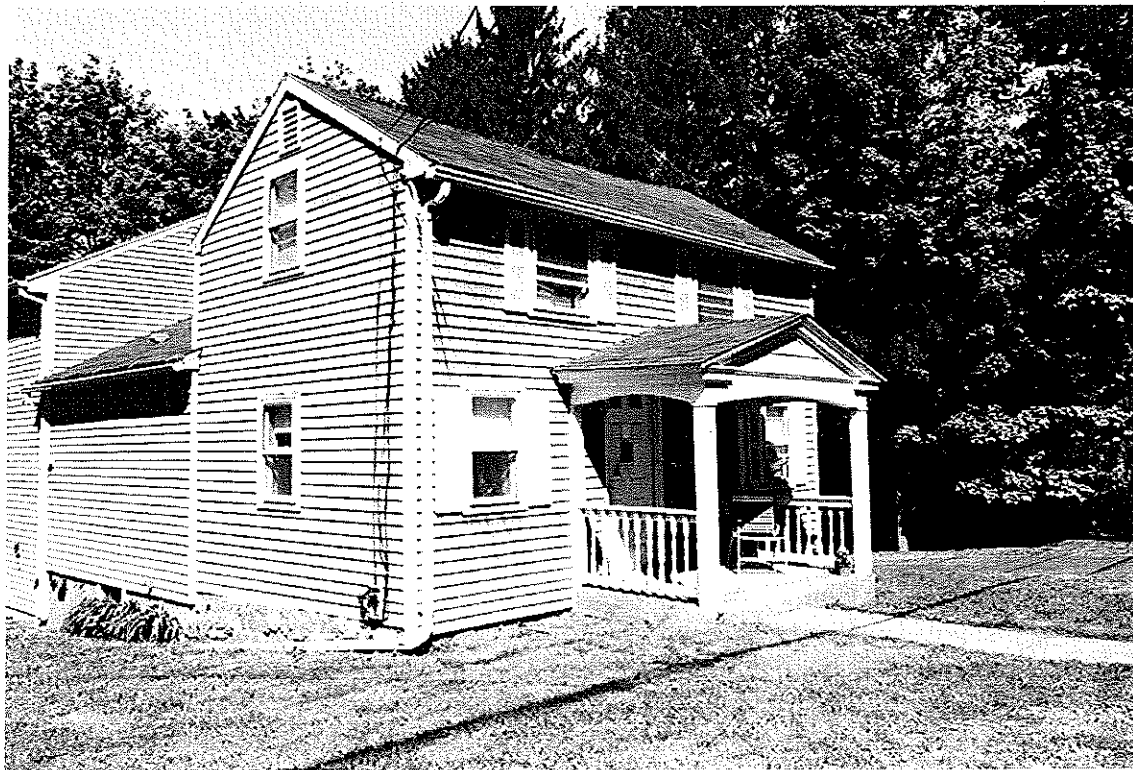
**Illustration 2. Photograph, Vine Street Streetscape, street addresses 1-3,5,7,9, and 11 (left to right).**



**Illustration 3. Photograph, 9 Vine Street, the Cambridge-Camm House, constructed circa 1840.**

Several houses on the west side of the neighborhood also date from the Civil War era. The 1861 Cross Street home of Amster and Emily Dingle at the corner of Knowles Avenue is a conventional three-bay, side-hall with an enclosed front porch. Neighboring cottages are found around the corner on Knowles Avenue (Ill. 16). The one at #10 was built by George O. Smith about 1865. The tall narrow house at #8, which does not appear on any nineteenth-century maps, may have been moved to this site or constructed as late as 1890, even though its form and six-over-six window sash suggest an earlier date. The 1915 Samuel Dixon House to the north at #12-14, which was built in the Colonial Revival style, replaced the c. 1865 Charles E. Morgan House on the site. The Dixon House features a columned two-story porch and arched hoods above the doorways. Two houses that complete this historic streetscape were built just prior to World War II.

Present-day Cross Street generally dates from after World War I, when the A.M.E. Zion Church relocated there. Two Colonial Revivals stand between the church and the store on the corner. The one at #146 has an original two-story porch, which is glassed in on either side at the upper level, and displays unusual windows with four vertical panes in the upper sash. A small Queen Anne-style window is found on the side elevation of the gambrel-roofed house next door erected about 1920.



**Illustration 4. Photograph, 11 Vine Street, the Isaac B. Truitt House, constructed circa 1848 on Lot B of Beman's Map by Ebenezer deforest and sold to Truitt in 1864.**

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In the 1820s free blacks were flocking to Connecticut cities looking for work. By far the largest group settled along the eastern coast, especially in New London, a region where ten percent of the state's total black population had lived as early as 1774. That year in Middletown, a flourishing river port that had once participated in the slave trade, there were 198 African Americans, compared to about 150 in Hartford. Most who migrated to Middletown in the nineteenth century came from rural areas within the state, but a significant number were born elsewhere. By 1830 the African American population of Middletown had reached 209. Representing about three percent of the total population, it was a high for the century. Many were employed at the port as dockworkers or seamen.

With the decline of the shipping and merchant trade in the coming decades, however, many mariners were out of work. Middletown lost almost 40 percent of its residents in this period, while the number of blacks declined by about 30 percent to reach a low of 137 in 1850. By then there were few job opportunities for African Americans other than menial labor. Although the shift from a maritime to an industrial economy was well under way, blacks were not hired for factory work. Apprenticeships in skilled trades were not an option since they were barred from membership in mechanics societies in the 1820s. The enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 may have contributed to the local out-migration. As reported in the *Constitution*, a weekly Middletown newspaper, this law caused quite a stir in the black community.<sup>1</sup> Free blacks feared for their liberty; activity was stepped up on the Underground Railroad, even though the "conductors" now faced stiffer prosecution.<sup>2</sup>

### The Grand Experiment

A shoemaker by trade like his father, Leverett Beman had a shop on Williams Street, historically the location of artisans and tradesmen since the colonial period. He married Clarissa, his first wife, in 1833. Shortly after the Beman family moved to the house at the corner of Cross and Vine Streets in 1843, Leverett began making plans to develop the neighborhood. In 1847 he commissioned a survey of the area. The surveyor's map of the subdivision that was filed with the Middletown Town Clerk recently came to light (Ill. 1). While ascribing motivations to historical figures is fraught with some peril, this serendipitous find confirms the authors' theory that the neighborhood was indeed a planned concept rather than random development, and that Beman was the prime mover.

Eleven small house lots, each averaging less than one-tenth acre, were laid out and received a letter designation (A through K). There were buildings on several lots that were owned by trustees of the A.M.E. Zion Church, indicating that Beman's project had their support. Lot K included Beman's house, which he had purchased from George Jeffreys, and Lot E, was the former home of Asa Jeffreys, who left the state in 1837. Ebenezer De Forest owned Lot B, where his house was under construction. This triangle of land was once part of Samuel Savage's farm, which was sold to Asa Jeffreys, with a mortgage in 1832. Through much of nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> October 9, 1850. Cited in "Black Perspectives on Middletown," 1976, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Conductors, or station agents, assisted slaves escaping to freedom in Canada, organizing escape routes and transportation, and often sheltered them in their homes or outbuildings.



century deeds continued to refer to the area as at or near "Dead Swamp," which may account for Savage's willingness to sell to an African American. Clearly not a useful part of the Savage farm, it also was not the most desirable area for a housing development. In fact, seasonal flooding of the brook that ran through the neighborhood to the swamp was a problem for most of its history.

### **Freedom Church and the Beman Family**

Jeffreys and Deforest were among the five original organizers of A.M.E. Zion, the second church of this denomination in the state and the third in the country. Until the church was built one block to the east in 1830, meetings were held in George Jeffreys' home with an interim preacher. The first official pastor was Leverett's father, the Reverend Jehiel Beman of Colchester, who brought his family to Middletown in 1828. Under his leadership, A.M.E. Zion became known as "Freedom Church" for its abolitionist activity. William Lloyd Garrison, the founder and editor of the *Liberator*, spoke there on several occasions. Garrison's newspaper was supported mainly by black subscriptions, but donations were made by wealthy white abolitionists. There were a number in the area that sympathized with the cause, including William Lyman of Middlefield, who defended black rights in the state legislature, and Middletown industrialist Benjamin O. Douglas, a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad.

The extent of the Beman family's participation in the anti-slavery movement was extraordinary. Clarissa Beman founded the Colored Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1834, the second in the country, and Leverett's brother, Amos Gerry Beman, became the pastor of the Temple Street Congregational Church in New Haven. Considered to be one of the most influential leaders of the black abolitionist movement, Reverend Amos Beman was a Connecticut delegate to several national conventions. Reverend Jehiel Beman, one of the founders of Middletown's Anti-Slavery Society, moved on to Boston in 1838, where he was active in the church and the temperance movement.

### **Community Development 1847-1875**

Unlike other known free-black urban neighborhoods in Connecticut, such as Jail Hill in Norwich, or Little Liberia in Bridgeport, which were largely unplanned, Beman's neighborhood was organized and coalesced into a relatively stable community within 40 years. Residents worked for low wages, but they saved their money, paid off their mortgages, raised families, and put down roots in the neighborhood. While the sums paid for properties were modest, most people had mortgages either with the sellers, or later, even from local banks. Sons and daughters intermarried and some stayed on in the neighborhood. Everyone had boarders to make ends meet. Two-family households were common, even in smaller cottages, and some of them were enlarged with wings or ells to accommodate more people. Despite these crowded living conditions, owners could proudly report a modest amount of property when the census takers made their rounds, which, after all, was the whole point to the neighborhood.

Most of the neighbors were local residents who had moved to the community when they could afford to buy property, but a surprising number came from other towns in Connecticut, as well as from other states. Colchester, Lyme, Hebron, New London, and Middlefield are some of the

known birthplaces in the state. Isaac Truitt had been a slave in Delaware. He and his wife, Eliza, came to Middletown with their first-born daughter Mary Ann. By 1870, his household included the Halls, another Delaware Family. Ephraim Dixon was born in Pennsylvania, as was Menominee Miami, a name that suggests he was a Native American, possibly of the Miami tribe. George Snipes was born in New York; his wife and daughter-in-law were born in Canada, suggesting their families may have been fugitive slaves. Thomas E. Smith came here from Virginia after the Civil War. Several originally migrated from the Deep South, including Isaac Jackson and Charles Foster from Louisiana, and at least one member of the Deforest Family was born in Georgia.

However much property ownership in an exclusive black neighborhood may have contributed to a sense of stability and security, in more tangible ways Beman's neighborhood remained a microcosm of the wider African American urban community. Although the people living here were marginally better off in economic terms than their fellows, which appears to be the case, they still faced the same *de facto* segregation in the workplace. By the 1850s when blacks in Middletown were competing with Irish immigrants for the same menial jobs, most men in the neighborhood worked as day laborers, and a few were seamen. Some like shoemaker Beman carved out a niche as an independent tradesman, and a few men had shops in the downtown after the Civil War. Such was the case with Truman Camm (9 Vine Street), a hostler before the war. By 1874 he was a hairdresser with his business located in the Mansion House, a hotel on Main Street. George Snipes, a tailor for more than 20 years, built a house on Vine Street about 1875, and raised a family of eight there.

In federal censuses of 1860 and 1870, residents of the neighborhood gave their occupations and estimates of net worth (real estate and personal property). Henry Freeman, born into slavery in Middletown the 1790s, worked as a gardener for the Alsops and managed to accumulate \$1200 in real estate by 1860. He had married Charlotte Cambridge, the widow of Edwin Cambridge, a seaman, who purchased 11 Vine Street from Ebenezer Deforest in 1860. Deforest, a mariner who moved to a mixed neighborhood elsewhere in town, then valued his property at \$1500. Charlotte Freeman was the daughter of Charles Morgan, a laborer who moved to Knowles Avenue about 1865, who also had \$1500 in real estate. In 1864 the Freemans sold their property to Isaac Truitt just before he left to fight in the Civil War. A seaman before the war, Truitt had rented a house on Vine Street, possibly the one he eventually bought, and listed only personal property worth \$200 on the 1860 census. Working at Wesleyan College as a chimney sweep, by 1870 Truitt, who also was a part-time farmer, had a combined estate of \$2000, of which \$1500 was in real estate. His cottage and lot were certainly worth much less, suggesting that Truitt also owned other property in town.

### Neighborhood Soldiers

The neighborhood was barely established when the Civil War began in 1861. Although African Americans were eager to fight to prove their patriotism and their equal worth as citizens, they were not allowed to serve. But by 1863, faced with increasing opposition to what some termed the "Negro War," the state could not fill its draft quotas, and a special act of the legislature established the first black infantry regiment. The 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment soon filled its quota and a second regiment, the 30<sup>th</sup>, was formed in January 1864. The 29<sup>th</sup> stayed together as a state regiment, while the 30<sup>th</sup> was absorbed into 31<sup>st</sup> United States Regiment Colored Infantry. Although some of the incentive was the \$300 bounty offered by the state, and smaller ones from

towns, many African Americans now volunteered to end slavery, which, for the black community, had become the true purpose of the war.

Amster Dingle, one of the first to volunteer for the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment (December 1864), died from disease within a month at the encampment in Fair Haven. He and his wife, Emily, had bought Lot E and built their house in 1861 (170 Cross Street). Emily's brother, John Peters, who served in Company D of the 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment, moved in with his sister and her two children after the war. Isaac Truitt enlisted in the 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment at Wethersfield in January 1864. Assigned to Company C, he was promoted up through the ranks, becoming a sergeant in August of 1865. Truman Camm, another veteran of the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company G, moved into 9 Vine Street after the war and lived there with his family until 1874. While parades and other celebrations greeted the regiments discharged in Hartford in late 1865, many returning veterans found that little had changed for black society. In Middletown and other industrial cities, the good jobs in factories were now taken by European immigrants. Although some local black veterans, who were received into the Grand Army of the Republic (Post #53), were buried in Indian Hill Cemetery near the 1884 monument erected by this organization, apparently none of the rest of the neighborhood veterans were members. Their graves, and those of some of their neighbors, are located in the nearby Washington Street Cemetery.

### Signs of Change

By 1875 outside investors began to purchase property in the neighborhood. As a result there were fewer owner-occupied houses and an increase in rental properties. Bartholomew J. Murphy, an Irish immigrant, owned two houses on Vine Street. He picked up the house at #21, once owned by Menominee Miami, after a foreclosure, a rare event in the neighborhood. Murphy sold it to Patrick Sullivan, another Irishman, who lived there for a few years with his Irish-born wife. Oddly enough the Sullivans who later rented the place were African Americans, as was Robert Sullivan, a baker, who lived at 10 Knowles Avenue with George A. Smith. He was possibly a partner in Brophy & Smith, the named owners on the map of 1874 of 9 Vine Street. The latter house was acquired in 1905 by Thomas E. Smith. Called "an artist in used furniture" by the *Penny Press* in 1891, he had a store and house on Main Street. Smith, who rented out the Vine Street place to black families until he sold it in 1923, was treasurer of the A.M.E. Zion Church. He led a fund drive in 1888 for the new parsonage building on Cross Street; the land was donated by Miss E.A. Worthington, a member of the church. Worthington lived at the Alsop's house on lower Washington Street, where she was one of four domestic servants.

Few African Americans moved into the neighborhood after 1900. Charles A. Warmesley, whose family originally came to Connecticut from Rhode Island, took over the George Smith House on Knowles Avenue (#10). Although Charles was a laborer, some of his cousins in town had jobs in industry, notably at Wilcox Crittenden, the marine hardware company. Rufus Addison, who worked at a local livery stable in town and lived in this house by 1915, died the following year. The next resident was Charles Jackson, who was listed in the city directory as an engineer. He moved here from Union Street in 1916 and stayed until 1927. His next-door neighbor during this period at #12-14 was Samuel Dixon, a barber, probably the first to move into the new Colonial Revival house there. His father Ephraim Dixon, also a barber, arrived in Middletown under un-



usual circumstances, having been rescued from the 1863 draft riots in New York City by abolitionist Benjamin Douglas.

### **Conclusion**

By the 1920s the grand experiment in community was essentially over, ironically just as the A.M.E. Zion Church was relocated down Cross Street (to the present church location) to make room for the expansion of the Wesleyan campus. The city's black population, which had been declining since 1900, had reached an all time low of 57. The first great migration from the South that began with World War I apparently never reached Middletown. Even after World War II, when practically all of the 50,000 African Americans in the state lived in cities, Middletown had fewer than 550. With a few notable exceptions, such as the third generation of the Dingle-Sparks family which lived at 170 Cross Street until 1930, or the Robinsons at the earlier house at 126-128 Knowles Avenue, the Truitts and other early families had died out or moved away. Swedish-Americans took their place, followed by several from the Italian-American community. Few in Middletown today recall the time when this black community flourished and current neighborhood residents never knew it existed. Wesleyan University owns all but two properties, and plans are underway to move the church to yet another location. Although no decisions have been made, the wrecking ball may be the final fate of this extraordinary neighborhood that was such an integral part of Middletown's African-American heritage.

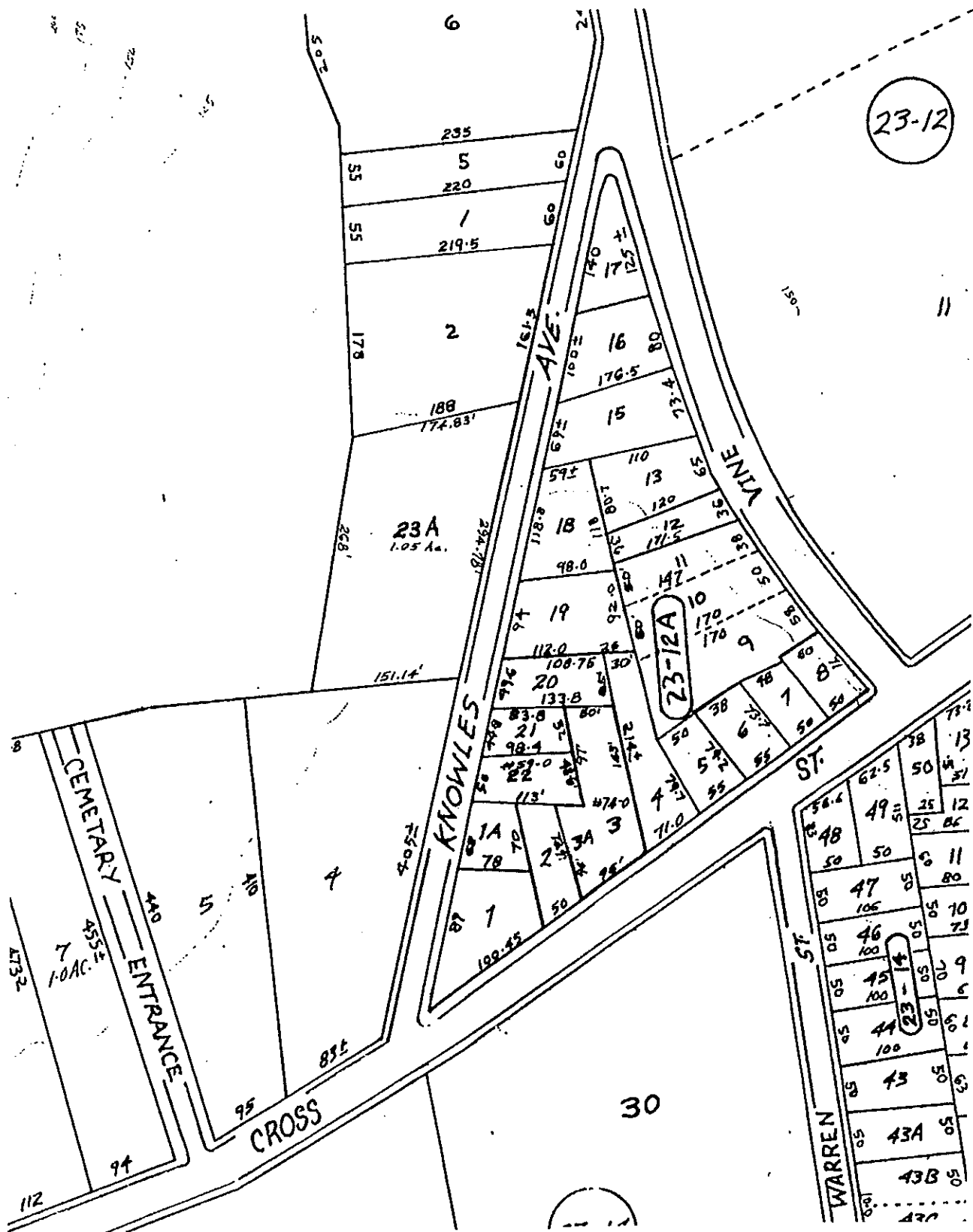


Illustration 6. Map of neighborhood, 2001. Reproduced from the Middlesex Tax Assessor's Map #23, Middletown, Connecticut.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Although limited in its scope, this case study has demonstrated the value of a comprehensive research approach to black history. By gathering bits and pieces of information from a variety of sources, the once anonymous lives of many Africans Americans were reconstructed, and in the process, much was learned about the development about one particular urban neighborhood. This report could be expanded into a study of city-wide black housing patterns. Given the small size of the black population in Middletown, it would be feasible to collate and analyze enough data to make valid comparisons between this neighborhood and the rest of the local black community.

In view of the fact that public schools in the state were not desegregated until after the Civil War, education for black children in Middletown is another area that should be explored. There were black schools in Colchester, Hartford, and New Haven in the 1800s. Census data suggests that many neighborhood children did not attend school, but nothing more is known about educational opportunities in Middletown.

An archaeological investigation may reveal more about the daily lives of the people in this neighborhood. The most likely area for test pitting would be in the middle of the block where the backyards abut one another. Although there has been some ground disturbance, a sewer line in 1895 and regrading of several lots along a section of Knowles Avenue in 1959, such an investigation is certainly indicated if plans move forward to demolish the buildings.

Finally, the approach employed in this report could be used to document urban housing and occupational patterns elsewhere in the state. As the findings in this case study have suggested, this type of research on a state-wide basis may refute the generally held assumption that few blacks owned property in the nineteenth century. Also, given the abolitionist activity in Hartford and New Haven, additional research in those cities may reveal the organization of similar neighborhoods by black leaders. If it turns out that this neighborhood was not unique, a comparative follow-up study is highly recommended.

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## **APPENDICES**

## INVENTORY OF NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDINGS AND SITES

### CROSS STREET

#### 130 Cross Street

##### CROSS STREET MARKET (Neon Deli), 1921

David Palmer, who built the present store by 1922, sold it that same year to Alice Kuligowski. She lived at 5 Vine Street with William and Antonio Kolikoski, who both worked for the Middletown Coal Company. The store was operated by Kuligowski until 1930, when she sold it to R. Haggerty; and from 1933-1953 it was owned by W. Russell Fladd. Salvatore and Ann Micciullaare were the store owners until it was sold to Salvatore and Sebastian Mazzotta, in 1985. Known as Cross Street Market since at least 1950, it became the Neon Deli in the 1990s.

#### 134 Cross Street

##### NEIL G. MACMILLAN HOUSE, c. 1920



Illustration 7. Photograph, 134 Cross Street.

### 146 Cross Street – Bronislaw Kobylenski House, 1928



Illustration 8. Photograph, 146 Cross Street.

### CROSS STREET A.M.E. ZION CHURCH, 1981

The present edifice was erected in 1981. It replaced the historic church that was moved to this site in 1921 from its original location one block to the east on the south side of Cross Street. When the old church was demolished in 1980, a leather bag with coins was found in the cornerstone. It contained about 25 pennies, presumably each one representing a member, and a quarter for the pastor. This artifact was a featured exhibit in the "History of Middletown," a show cosponsored by Wesleyan University and the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust in 1981.

### 168 Cross Street – Ranch, 1951

**SITE HISTORY:** The present house was built on or near the site of the 1889 parsonage of the A.M.E. Zion Church. It had replaced an earlier 1848 house, which was the home of Robert Huntington. He had married Beulah Jeffreys, daughter of Asa Jeffreys, a church trustee, in 1837. By 1850 Huntington and his second wife shared the house with the Reverend P.W. West, the church pastor, and his wife, Ellen. Isaac Jackson is identified on the 1874 map as the owner of this house. Born in Virginia, Isaac was a laborer and he lived there with his wife, Mary, John Jackson, age 26, and Robert Foster, age 12. In 1880, when Jackson was a peddler, his household included his wife and their



son, John H., age 13, Alicia Lane, 60, and Laura Franklin, his granddaughter, who was ten. H. N. Foster owned this house in the 1880s. Born in 1832 in Louisiana, he worked as a barber. He and his wife, Mary, had two children, Charles A., born in 1856, and Helen, born in 1858.

In September of 1888, *The Middletown Press* reported that Miss E.A. Worthington gave the A.M.E. Zion Church land valued at \$375 on Cross Street on which the old parsonage stands. Eliza Worthington, born in Connecticut in 1825, was listed in the censuses of 1860 and 1870 as one of four domestic servants living at the home of Clara Alsop at 20 Washington Street. The church immediately began to make plans to replace the old house with a new parsonage. The public was requested to help support the project. Thomas E. Smith, secretary and treasurer of the church, organized the fundraising efforts. The Rev. C. Fanfat, Miss E.G. Smith, and Miss M.A. Smith were authorized to collect the subscriptions. On November 12, 1889, James Moore and Son were contracted to do the masonry work and "Rhodes," the wood work. Later that month the paper announced that the church still needed \$300 to complete the parsonage. It was a two-story structure with its gable end facing the street.

#### 170 Cross Street

#### AMSTER AND EMILY DINGLE HOUSE, 1861



Illustration 9. Photograph, 170 Cross Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Two-story, three-bay, side-hall plan Victorian (20' x 24') with gabled façade and a brick foundation. Enclosed entrance porches front and rear. Most windows have 2/2 sash and there is one 6/1 on left side of façade.

**SITE HISTORY:** This house stands on Lot F of Leverett Beman's map, which in 1847 was the location of the Asa Jeffreys House (no longer extant). Jeffreys, who married Betsey Morgan in 1803, built his house in 1828, when he came to Middletown from Lyme. He was a trustee of the A.M.E. Zion Church at its founding in 1828, and services were held in his house before the church was built in 1830. His son, George W. Jeffrey, and daughter-in-law Mary (Campbell), who were married at Haddam in 1830, also lived in the house. When Asa left Middletown in 1837, he sold the property to his son, who died by 1850. At that time George's widow lived there with her son, George Jeffreys, age 19, and four of her other children, who ranged in age from ten to 17. Cato Freeman, a laborer, who boarded there, bought Lot E, the adjoining property, in 1851. Although he had a mortgage for \$47, Freeman did not build a house, and he sold the lot in 1852.

**PRESENT HOUSE HISTORY:** There were no houses on either Lot E or F when Amster and Emily Dingle bought both parcels for \$100 in 1861 from W. Greensbury and Elizabeth Offley of Hartford. Amster Dingle, who was born in 1831 in Delaware, was a seaman. His wife, Emily, the daughter of Henry and Lydia Peters, was born in 1840 and they married about 1857. Amster Dingle volunteered for service in the Civil War, 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, in December 1864, but he died within a month at the muster camp at Fair Haven. Emily's brother, John Peters, who also enlisted in the same company, made his home with his sister and her two daughters, Elizabeth, age 8, and Mary, age 6, after the war. In 1880 John Royston was living in the house with Mary and her mother. He was identified as Emily Dingle's son-in-law, the husband of her deceased eldest daughter Elizabeth. When Emily Dingle died in 1889, her estate, passed down to Mary, who married Thomas Sparks about 1893. At that time, he was employed at S. Electric Co., and Mary was a dressmaker. She mortgaged the property in 1889, and paid off the loan to Thomas E. Smith in 1904. Thomas Sparks, a chef, lived here in 1914. His son Karl D. Sparks was a chauffeur.

## KNOWLES AVENUE

### 6 Knowles Avenue, 1947

John W. Atkinson, an assistant professor at Wesleyan University, lived here in 1947.

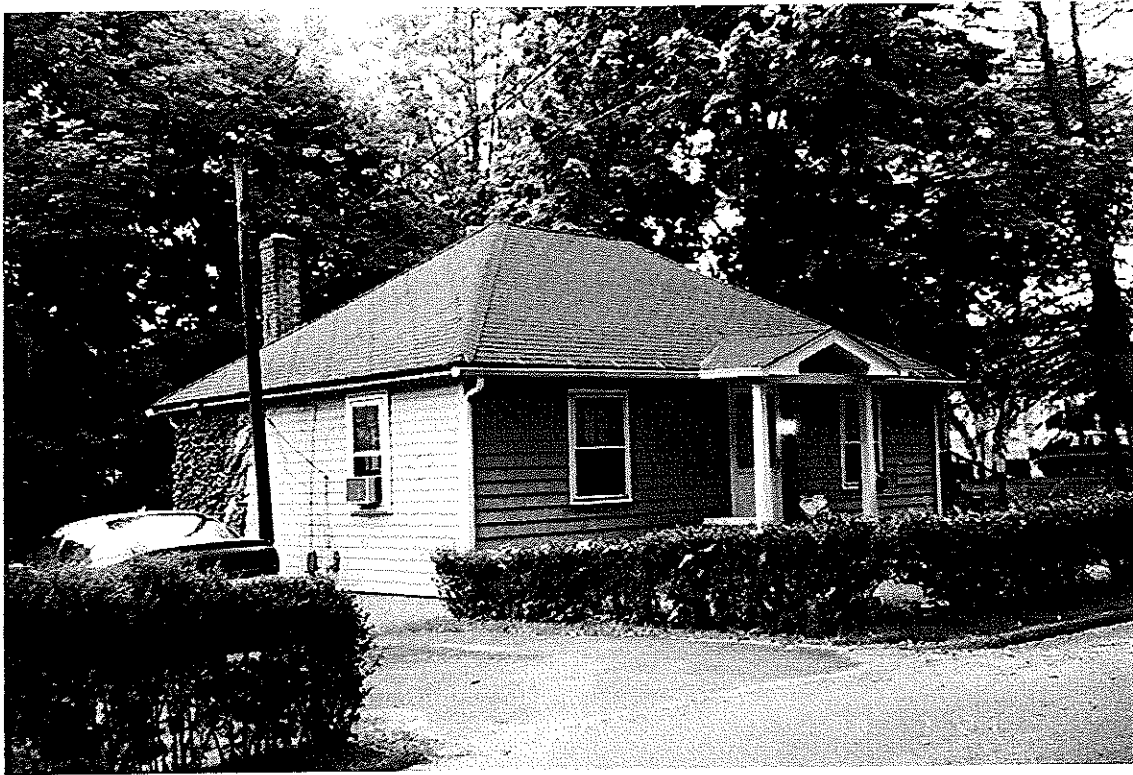
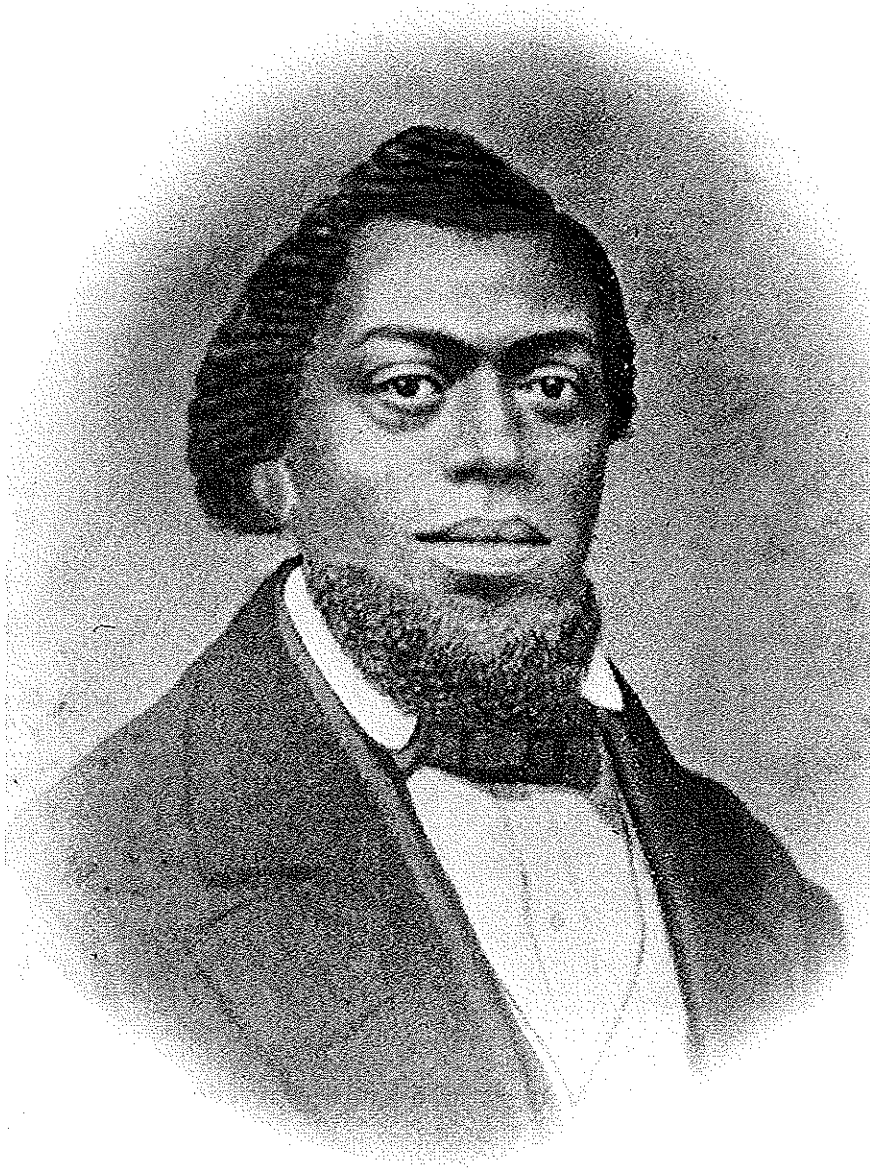


Illustration 10. Photograph, 6 Knowles Avenue.



**Illustration 11. Amster C. Dingle, veteran of Company F, Twenty-ninth (Colored) Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. Original at Middlesex County Historical Society, 151 Main Street, Middletown, CT**

8 Knowles Avenue, c. 1900



Illustration 12. Photograph, 8 Knowles Avenue

**DESCRIPTION:** Two-story, one-room deep vernacular house (16' x 13) with two-over three bay original façade, gabled roof, and brick foundation. There are several additions: An early or original rear ell (12' x 14') on a brick foundation with small addition on south side (4' x 9'); a recent shed-roofed section at right side of façade (on piers). Entire house presently clad with vinyl siding. Most of the double-hung sash is 6/6.

**HISTORY:** Lillie Harold is listed in the directories as the owner from 1915 until 1937, when Harold J. Dooley is listed as a resident. This house does not appear on any maps in the nineteenth century, but is shown on the 1924 Sanborn map. Francis Steinhilper bought the house in 1947, and it is still owned by his descendants.

**GEORGE O. SMITH HOUSE, c. 1865**



**Illustration 13. Photograph, 10 Knowles Avenue.**

**DESCRIPTION:** 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular ridge-to-street cottage with a narrow main block (26' x 12') and a gabled roof. One-story rear addition with gable roof (24' x 19') offset slightly to south. Brick foundation and asbestos siding. Entrance porch enclosed at right front of façade. Rectangular window in north gable peak and 2/2 sash, probably original, throughout.

**HISTORY:** In 1863 Orrice M. Smith, the wife of George Oliver Smith, purchased Lot H, as laid out by Beman in 1847. The sellers were Amster C. Dingle (170 Cross Street) and William Woodward. By 1870 another deed between Orrice and her son, George, mentioned a house on the property. George, a laborer in 1870, had \$500 in real estate and \$125 in personal property. Robert Sullivan, a baker, and his wife were also part of this household. City directories have George Smith listed as a flocker (someone who stuffs upholstered furniture) in 1874 and 1880, but his occupation in the 1880 census was ice-cream seller. At that time he lived with Martha Seignior, a divorcee. By 1900 Smith is no longer listed in the directories or census, and this house is occupied by Charles A. Warmesley and his wife, Merlua V., who was born in New York.

Charles, the son of George Warmesley, was a day laborer. His grandfather, Josiah, the earliest member on the Warmesley family on record, lived in Kingston, Rhode Island, in 1785. He moved to Middlefield, Connecticut, by 1822 and lived on Cherry Hill Road with his sons, George and Horace. Both sons found employment at local factories, including Wilcox, Crittenden & Company. Horace's son, James, was a fireman. Warmesley descendants still live in Middletown.

According to the city directories, Rufus Addison is living here in 1915. Born in 1842, Addison lived on Hotchkiss Street in 1880 and worked at a livery stable until his death in 1916. The next occupants were Charles Caples, an engineer, and Laura Jackson, who had formerly lived on Union Street. Ignatz Siencienski appears as the occupant by 1928.

#### 12-14 Knowles Avenue



Illustration 14. Photograph, 12-14 Knowles Avenue.

#### CHARLES N. MORGAN HOUSE SITE, c. 1865

**SITE HISTORY:** Charles N. Morgan (1807-1885), son of Japhet Morgan of Colchester, lived here by 1870 and the house was first shown on a historic map in 1874. A laborer with \$1500 in real estate, Morgan was married to his second wife, Nancy Worthington Hovey, the widow of Charles Hovey. Two children by his first wife, Mary Ann Bacon, were already married: Charlotte to Edwin Cambridge; and Mary (Minnie) to Robert Coe. Morgan and his wife were still living here in 1880 after he had retired.

#### SAMUEL DIXON HOUSE, c. 1915

**DESCRIPTION:** Colonial Revival double-decker (28' x 41'), with a gable-to-street orientation. Two-story front porch displays round columns over shingled skirt above and brick piers at grade. Entrances on either side have curved hoods supported by consoles.



There is a smaller two-story porch across the rear. Other details include pedimented dormers in the slopes of main roof. There is hipped-roof garage at the rear of the property.

**HISTORY:** Samuel Dixon, a barber, and Richard Hasbrouck, were the heads of two families living here from 1915 until 1927. Dixon was the son of Ephraim Dixon, also a barber, who was rescued in New York City during the draft riots by Middletown abolitionist, Benjamin Douglas. When the Dixon family lived on Court Street in 1880, the household included his mother, Caroline Dixon, and 18-year-old brother Ephraim.

**126-128 Knowles Avenue**



**Illustration 15. Photograph, 126-128 Knowles Avenue.**



## **ASAHEL DEFOREST HOUSE SITE, before 1840**

**SITE HISTORY:** Asahel Deforest probably built his house before 1840 and it is shown on Lot D on the Beman map of 1847. Listed in the census for the first time in 1840, by 1860 Deforest was a laborer living here with his wife Abbey, and a young boy, James Martin, age 5. At that time he had \$800 in real estate, and he and his wife had several boarders: Mary Ann Snipes, 26; John Snipes, 27; Mariann Deforest, 10; Elizabeth Snipes, 3 months. In 1870 Asahel (also Asell or Asa) was a coachman. His household then included Cornelius Beecher, 9, John C. Snipes, 7, Susan Snipes, 26, Frank Morgan, 31, laborer, and Samuel and Mary Evans, a barber and a dressmaker. Abigail was a widow by 1880 and lived here with her adopted daughter, Miriam E. Robinson, 28, and her grandson, Enoch Robinson, 1. Miriam, the widow of John H. Robinson, remained in the house after Abigail's death until 1930.

## **GIUSEPPE TINE HOUSE, 1937**

**DESCRIPTION:** Two-story gambrel-roofed Colonial Revival (26' x 46') with brick masonry at first floor and wood-frame above. Shed dormers on each side display paired windows and there is small addition with a porch across the rear.

**HISTORY:** This house was built as a two-family home by Giuseppe Tine, an Italian immigrant, on land he purchased from Albert and Lottie Olson.

## **134 Knowles Avenue**

### **SANTINA TINE HOUSE, 1959**

The land here, which originally belonged to Asahel Deforest, was sold to Albert and Lottie Olson in 1935. Tine, the builder of this house, was also responsible for burying the brook at the rear of the property, which once ran from the swamp where the Wesleyan's Freeman Athletic Center stands today, to a pond located north of the neighborhood on the present site of the campus tennis courts. He also built the brownstone retaining wall on the property.

## **VINE STREET**

### **1-3 Vine Street**

#### **ALBERT ANDERSON HOUSE, c. 1910**

**DESCRIPTION:** The house was architecturally compromised in 1988 by the application of artificial stone siding. The original form and materials are not known.

**HISTORY:** Albert Anderson, who built this two-family house, was a laborer and his tenant was Lester J. Martin, a machinist. Anderson's race is not known, but given that he previously lived on Prospect Place, he may have been African American.

5 Vine Street, c. 1890



Illustration 16. Photograph, 5 Vine Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Two-story double-decker (28' x 26') with asbestos siding and stuccoed brick foundation. Front porches offset to left: lower porch enclosed; upper porch displays original square posts at outside corners. Modern porch addition along south elevation.

**HISTORY:** This house stands on the one-acre parcel at the corner of Park (Vine) and Cross Street designated as Lot K on Leverett Beman's map of 1847. At that time the lot included Beman's house, which he bought from George Jeffreys in 1843. After Beman's death in 1883, Edwin B. Fall was the administrator of his estate, and in 1888, the property was inherited by his youngest son and executor Charles A. Beman in 1888. It was sold to Rufus Baker, a local (white) physician, and still part of his estate in 1904. The property then included two buildings valued at \$1690: this house at 5 Vine Street; and Beman's house on the corner, which was subsequently torn down. The lots were divided up soon thereafter into the old house lot, (now a parking lot), the store lot (130 Cross St.), and this house lot. Albert Anderson lived here in 1907, and may have owned the house. He later built 1 Vine Street. In 1922 the Kuligowski family owned this house, and the store that now stands at 130 Cross Street.

## 7 Vine Street

### GEORGE SNIPES HOUSE, c. 1875

**DESCRIPTION:** Two-over-three bay, gable-to-street Queen Anne cottage, with open Victorian porch. Stuccoed brick foundation. Square Queen Anne window on north elevation. Most of the rest of the sash is 2/2. Alterations include raised wall dormers on side elevations and staircase to second floor on south side.

**HISTORY:** This house, which first appears on the map of 1877, was occupied in 1880 by George Snipes, a tailor in Middletown for more than 30 years. He was born in New York, and his wife, Margaret, whom he married in 1857, was born in Canada in 1839. Their seven children were all born in Connecticut. Before moving to the neighborhood, the Snipes family lived on Prospect Street in 1860 and in 1870 Snipes estimated his net worth at \$900. Other members of the Snipes family lived on Knowles Avenue with Asa Deforest. By 1914 this house is occupied by a white woman, Mrs. Benjamin Pierce.

## 9 Vine Street

### CAMBRIDGE-CAMM HOUSE, c. 1840



Illustration 17. Photograph, 9 Vine Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular cottage (18' x 22') with two-over-three bay gabled façade, and enclosed front porch. Brick foundation. Small rectangular original sash in façade gable peak; other windows 6/6. Side (south) porch at junction with rear shed-roofed one-story addition (23' x 12'). Small additional one-story section (14' x 8') left rear.

**HISTORY:** This property was owned by Ebenezer Deforest before it was sold to John Cambridge in 1855. A laborer born in Connecticut, Cambridge lived here with his second wife Emma,\* and James and Orry (Orrice) Brooks, both 19, the children of Herod and Abigail (Jeffreys) Brooks, who had moved to Middletown from Lyme before 1830. By 1870 Brooks was a seaman, living here with his wife, Jeanette, the daughter of John Cambridge, and his sister had married George O. Smith (10 Knowles Avenue). They shared the house with Truman Camm, his wife Catherine, and their son George A., age 14. Also with them is William F. Chatfield, age 10. Camm, who had served in the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, was a barber in 1870, and listed as a kalsominer [sic] in the 1891 directory. On the 1874 map, the house is identified with Smith & Brophy. Brophy also was the owner of a house on the west side of Knowles Avenue (no longer extant), and his partner may have been George Smith. Thomas E. Smith (apparently no relation) owned this house from 1905 to 1923, but he never lived there. He and his wife, Minnie, lived at 302 Main Street, where his real estate and used furniture store was located. A member of the A.M.E. Zion Church and treasurer for many years, Smith led a fund drive to erect a new parsonage in the neighborhood on land donated on Cross Street in 1888. Smith sold the property to Theron Geer, who owned it until 1935.

\*In 1860 Eunice Cambridge, John's first wife, lived on Prospect Street and worked as a washerwoman. At that time, her son, Edwin, lived next door.

ISAAC B. TRUITT HOUSE, 1848



Illustration 18. Photograph, 11 Vine Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** Ridge-to-street gabled cottage (22' x 14') with two-over-three bay façade. Clapboard siding and brownstone foundation. Gabled Colonial Revival entrance portico added in 1900s. Two rear additions: one-story connector (22' x 15') to two-story rear section (26' x 16').

**HISTORY:** This was Lot B on Beman's map, shown with a house under construction in 1847. When Leverett C. Beman sold the lot to Ebenezer Deforest, the deed referred to a mortgage already on the property held by Samuel Savage. In 1856 Deforest, a seaman, mortgaged it again for \$320 to his neighbor John Cambridge, who owned the house at #9. In 1850 Ebenezer's house apparently was occupied by S.S. Deforest, a 76-year-old laborer, and his wife, Sarah, 72, probably his parents. In 1860 Deforest sold the house to John's son, Edwin Cambridge, a 22-year-old seaman, and moved to a mixed neighborhood elsewhere in Middletown with his wife and son. Before his death in 1862, Edwin lived on Prospect Place with his wife, Charlotte, the daughter of Charles Morgan, who then lived at 12 Knowles Avenue. In 1864 his estate, which still included the Vine Street property, went to his widow, now the wife of Henry Freeman.\* In 1864 the Freemans sold the house to Isaac B. and Eliza A. Truitt.

Isaac Truitt lived in this neighborhood as early as 1860, when he appears in the federal census next door to Leverett Beman. It is likely that he rented this house before he bought it in 1864. Truitt then was a seaman with a net worth of \$200. Both he and his wife, Eliza, and daughter Mary were born in Delaware; they came to Middletown about 1853, where five more children were born. Truitt fought in the Civil War, Company C,

31<sup>st</sup> United States Regiment, and was promoted to sergeant before his discharge in 1864. Alfred Powers,\*\* who served in Company E, 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, married Truitt's daughter Harriet, and after her death, he married her sister, Emily.

In 1870 Truitt is listed in the census as a laborer with \$1500 in real estate and \$500 in personal property. Living with his family were James Holt, age 4, and William Hall from Delaware with his wife, Mary, and four children, all born in New Jersey. Isaac worked for Wesleyan as the school's chimney sweep, cleaning the stove pipes in student rooms until his death in 1877. His photograph, seated on a table with a shovel and broom, appeared in student yearbooks in the 1870s. By 1900, the property, then part of the estate of Christopher Collins, was sold to Martin Hanson, and later twentieth-century owners included Ellen B. Bengston, 1914, and Nancy C. Hills, 1934.

\*In 1860 Henry Freeman was a 70-year-old gardener worth \$1200, with a wife, Eleni (39), and a year-old son. He worked for Mr. Alsop on Washington Street. Charlotte Cambridge was his second wife. According to a 1886 newspaper article in *The Middletown Press*, Henry Freeman, then 87, lived on Berlin Street. It referred to his participation in the A.M.E. Zion Church at the time. Another article in 1888 mentions that Mr. Freeman, by then 89, celebrated his sister Phebe Daniel's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She became a member of the local Baptist Church in 1829. Both Freemans were born into slavery in Middletown.

\*\*James Powers, Alfred's brother, served in the same company. Truitt and the Powers brothers are buried in the Washington Street Cemetery in Middletown.



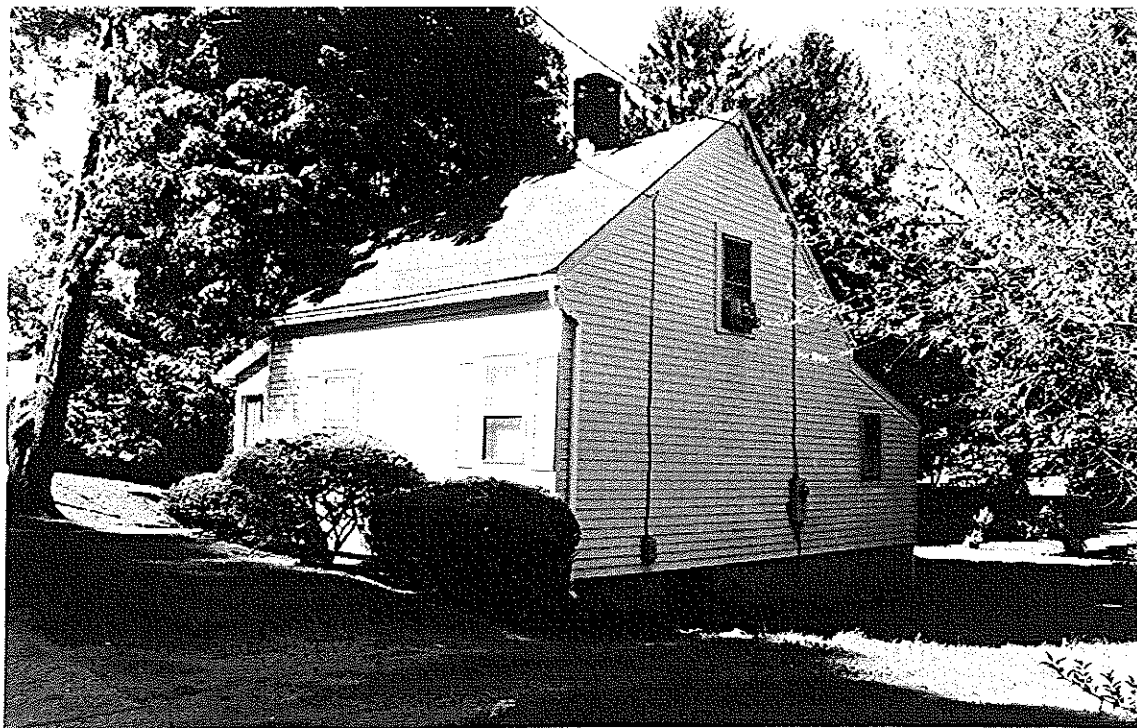
*The College Sweep.*

*Isaac B. Truitt*

**Illustration 19**

**Photograph of Isaac Truitt in civilian clothes. Truitt lived on Vine Street in Middletown and was employed as a chimney sweep for Wesleyan University during the 1870's. Courtesy of Wesleyan University Library, Special Collections and Archives**

**BARTHOLOMEW J. MURPHY HOUSE, c. 1870**



**Illustration 20. Photograph, 19 Vine Street.**

**DESCRIPTION:** One-story gabled cottage (19' x 21') with ridge-to-street orientation and rear shed-roofed addition (19' x 7'). Brick foundation. Enclosed side porch on south elevation. Most windows contain 6/6 sash.

**HISTORY:** According to the 1874 map, Murphy was the owner of this rental property. Abigail Stanton, who owned other real estate (\$2000 in 1870), was a possible tenant. Albert & Lottie Olson acquired the house in the early 1900s. They also owned the land on Knowles Avenue where Asahel Deforest's house stood prior to 1930.



MENNOMINEE L. MIAMI HOUSE, c. 1850



Illustration 21. Photograph, 21 Vine Street.

**DESCRIPTION:** 19<sup>th</sup>-century, 1½-story vernacular house built in two narrow sections, forming an intersecting gable plan. Clapboard siding and brick foundation. Left-hand gable-to-street main block dates from c. 1850 (16' x 20'), and right wing (16' x 14') added about c. 1870. Open Victorian porch with turned posts also c. 1870. 6/6 original sash throughout.

**HISTORY:** This was Lot A on Beman's map, which was purchased by Robert Huntington. He sold the lot to Elizabeth Henry, a widow, in 1848. In 1862 Henry sold the property with buildings for \$100 to Menominee L. Miami, who already lived there with his wife. In 1860 Miami's occupation was listed in the census as "quack doctor." They mortgaged the house in 1864 for \$250 to Christopher Collins. The mortgage was taken over in 1868 by Charles T. Dixon, but he turned it back to Collins and the house was forfeited in 1871. Collins sold the house to Bartholomew J. Murphy that same year for \$600. (Collins later owned #11, which was part of his estate at his death in 1900.) A year later Murphy sold it to Patrick and Bridget Sullivan, Irish immigrants, who appear here on the Beers 1874 map in this location and are listed in the 1880 census. However, Arthur Sullivan and Michael Sullivan, black laborers, lived here in 1875 and 1880, according to city directories. Other African American Sullivans in the neighborhood were Robert, who lived in George Smith's house on Knowles Avenue, and Henry, a barber, who lived on Cross Street with his wife and four children. By 1935 this house was owned by Peter J. Anderson.

**MATILDA MORTON HOUSE, 1904**



**Illustration 22. Photograph, 23 Vine Street.**

**DESCRIPTION:** Almost square in plan (29' x 26'), this two-over-three-bay, gable-roofed house has a concrete foundation and vinyl siding. There is a two-story addition (12' x 13') on south elevation. Most of the windows are 2/2. The front porch has modern metal supports and a shallow hip roof.

**HISTORY:** The house first appears in the distribution of Matilda Morton Anderson's estate in 1933. Directories show Morton here for the first time in 1904, and she has tenants living here in 1914: Johanna Hills, who worked at Goodyear Rubber Co.; and John Johnson, who worked at Wilcox, Crittenden, & Co. This property is closely linked with 21 Vine Street. Matilda Morton bought land on Park Street (now Vine) in 1904 from Albert Olson, who owned 19 Vine Street. Her relative, Peter Anderson, who lived at #21 in 1914, quitclaimed the two pieces from Anderson's estate to Emma A. Bloomquist in 1933. The Bloomquists owned #23 until 1951.

# BIOGRAPHICAL COMPILATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN MIDDLETOWN

<u>RESIDENT</u>	<u>BIRTHPLACE</u>
<b>ADDISON</b> Rufus (1840-1916) Lucretia (1846-1919), wife	Washington, D.C. South Carolina
<b>BEECHER</b> Dempsey (1830-c. 1895) Sarah A. (b. 1838) 1 <sup>st</sup> wife Malinda (b. 1847) 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife ✓ Cornelius (b. 1861) lived with Asahel Deforest	South Carolina South Carolina Connecticut
<b>BEMAN</b> *Rev. Jehiel C. (c. 1789-1885) *Fanny (1797-1830) 1 <sup>st</sup> wife Leverett Caster (1810-1883) Clarissa M. (d. c. 1834) 1 <sup>st</sup> wife Jehiel Chappel (1834-1857) MaryAnn (1813-1887) 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife Nancy M. (b. 1836) Emma Elizabeth (b. 1840) Clarissa Ann (b. 1844), m. Richard Johnson Mary Jane (1845-1847) Charles Aaron (b. 1847) Elizabeth (b. 1846), nee Roul, wife Harriet (1849-1887) m. Rev. Fernando Wood *Rev. Amos Gerry (1812-1874) *Sarah (c. 1814), m. Roswell Jeffrey *Lydia (1815-1872) m. George Williams, 1873 *Harriet (c. 1817), m. Ezekial Caples Nancy (1790-1856) 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife	Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT Middletown, CT New Jersey Middletown, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT New Haven, CT
<b>BIDDLE</b> Rev. George	
<b>BROOKS</b> *Herod (d. 1867) *Abigail (Jeffreys), m. c. 1814 *William (b. 1814) *Abigail James (b. 1831) Jeanette (b. 1835) his wife, da. John Cambridge, m. 1855 Orrice (b. 1833), m. George Smith	Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Colchester, CT Lyme, CT Lyme, CT Lyme, CT

\* lived outside neighborhood

RESIDENTBIRTHPLACE

## CAMBRIDGE

John (b. 1814) aka Canbray	Lyme, CT
Eunice (b. 1801) 1 <sup>st</sup> wife	Lyme, CT
Edwin (1838-1862)	Meriden, CT
Charlotte (b. 1834) wife, da. Charles N. Morgan, m. 1860	Meriden, CT
Emma (b. 1819) 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife	Meriden, CT

## CAMM

Truman (b. 1833)	Meriden, CT
Nancy M. (b. 1837) 1 <sup>st</sup> wife	Meriden, CT
Catherine (b. 1840) 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife	Meriden, CT
George A. (b. 1856)	Meriden, CT
Maria (b. 1855)	Meriden, CT

## CAPLES

*Robert (c. 1800–d. before 1859), m. Abigail (Carter) Fuller, 1827	Meriden, CT
Charles	Meriden, CT
*James K. (d. 1889) Company F. 55 <sup>th</sup> Reg't, MA	Meriden, CT
*Wallace (b. 1873)	Meriden, CT

## CARTER

*Asher, lived in Middlefield by 1822	Meriden, CT
*Rachel, his widow, in Middletown by 1830	Meriden, CT
*Alice, m. James Williams, 1822	Meriden, CT
*Augustus (1815-1872)	Meriden, CT
*Laura, wife	Meriden, CT
*Charles (b. 1845), m. Anna Warmesley, 1872	Meriden, CT
*Charles, Jr. (b. 1874)	Meriden, CT
*Eugene (b. 1874)	Meriden, CT
*Henry (b. 1844)	Meriden, CT
*Artemus (b. 1825)	Meriden, CT

## CHATFIELD

William (b. 1860), lives with Truman Camm	Meriden, CT
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## DANIELS

*Joseph (b. 1810)	Meriden, CT
*Pelonia (b. 1812), wife	Meriden, CT
Mary Jane (b. 1840), later lived with Henry P. Sullivan	Meriden, CT
*Henry (b. 1817)	Meriden, CT
*Elmira (b. 1818), wife	Meriden, CT
*Phebe (b. 1797), sister of Henry Freeman	Meriden, CT
*Charles (b. 1820)	Meriden, CT
*Eliza (c. 1827), wife	Meriden, CT
*Jane (b. 1825), m. _____ Young	Meriden, CT
* lived outside neighborhood	

<u>RESIDENT</u>	<u>BIRTHPLACE</u>
DANIELS	
John (b. 1838)	Meriden, CT
Ephraim	
Caroline (Sullivan D.)	
DEFOREST	
S.S. or E. (b. 1774)	Georgia
Sarah (b. 1773), wife	Connecticut
*Richard (b. 1833)	Connecticut
*Sarah (b. 1838)	Connecticut
Ebenezer (b. 1806)	Connecticut
Rebecca (b. 1826), wife	Pennsylvania
*Mariann (b. 1850)	Connecticut
*Isaac (b. 1858)	Connecticut
Asahel (b. 1809) aka Asa, Asell	Connecticut
Abigail (b. 1812), wife	Connecticut
Mary A. (b. 1834)	Connecticut
DINGLE	
Amster (1831-1864), Company D. 29 <sup>th</sup> Reg't	Delaware
Emily (1840-1889), da. Henry & Lydia Peters, wife	Connecticut
Elizabeth (1857-c. 1880), m. John Royston	Connecticut
Mary (b. 1859), m. Thomas L. Sparks	Connecticut
DIXON (or DICKSON)	
*Dixon, Ephraim (b. 1830)	Pennsylvania
*Caroline (Sullivan; b. 1840 or 1845), 1 <sup>st</sup> wife (divorced)	Connecticut
*Maria (aka Carrie; b. 1860)	Connecticut
*Ephraim, Jr. (b. 1862)	Connecticut
Samuel (b. 1870)	Connecticut
Mary Harris, 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife, 1880	New Jersey
*Charles (b. 1825)	Africa
*Nellie Daniels (b. 1836), wife	Connecticut
*Charles (b. 1862)	
*Bridget (b. 1865)	
EVANS	
Samuel (b. 1841) lived with Asahel Deforest	Maryland
Mary (b. 1827) lived with Asahel Deforest	Maryland
FOSTER	
George (b. 1810)	
Maria (b. 1815), wife	
John (b. 1832)	
George (b. 1836)	
* lived outside neighborhood	

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE**

Hannah (b. 1839)	
Susan (b. 1844)	
Mary (b. 1848)	
H.N. (b. 1832)	Louisiana
Mary S. (b. 1828), wife	Connecticut
Charles A. (1847-1860)	Connecticut
Helen (b. 1858)	Connecticut
Robert (b. 1858), lives with Isaac Jackson	Connecticut
FRANKLIN	
Laura (b. 1870), lived with Isaac Jackson	Virginia
FREEMAN	
*Henry (1800-1890)	Connecticut
*Eleni (b. 1821), wife	Connecticut
*Henry P. (b. 1859)	Connecticut
*Mary A. (b. 1860)	Connecticut
Cato (b. 1822), lived with Mary Jeffrey	Connecticut
Sylvester (b. 1819), lived with Edwin Cambridge	Connecticut
GARRISON	
George (b. 1801)	Connecticut
Abigail (b. 1802), wife	Connecticut
Emma J. (b. 1826)	Connecticut
Alfred (b. 1835)	Connecticut
GORDON	
*Christian (d. 1865), Company B, 29 <sup>th</sup> Reg't.	Connecticut
HALL	
William (b. 1841), lives with Isaac Truitt	Delaware
Mary (b. 1843), wife	Delaware
HAROLD	
Lillian (race unknown)	
HENRY	
Elizabeth (b. 1791), widow of Abiather R. Henry	Connecticut
*George H.	Connecticut
*Kelsey (1818-1849)	Connecticut
* Levi (1829-1857), m. Frances Williams, 1852	Connecticut
Mary F. (b. 1852)	Connecticut

\* lived outside neighborhood

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE****HILL**

\*Moses (1847-1910), Company F. 29<sup>th</sup> Reg't.

**HOLT**

James (b. 1866), lives with Isaac Truitt

Connecticut

**HUNTINGTON**

Eliza (b. 1818)

Connecticut

Henry (1789-1855)

Connecticut

Robert (b. 1820)

Connecticut

Beulah, da. Asa Jeffrey, wife, m. 1837

Connecticut

**JACKSON**

Jane (b. 1795), lived with Truman Camm

"Down South"

Isaac H. (b. 1820)

VA or LA

Mary S. (b. 1853)

Connecticut

John H. (b. 1867)

New York

Saminto (b. 1861)

New Jersey

Laura (b. 1860), wife

North Carolina

Hatty (b. 1878)

Connecticut

Jacob (b. 1885)

Connecticut

Samuel (b. 1889)

Connecticut

Laura (b. 1892)

Connecticut

Jessie (b. 1893)

Connecticut

Charles (b. 1895)

Connecticut

George (b. 1857)

Connecticut

Ida (b. 1865), wife

Connecticut

John (b. 1854) lived with Isaac Jackson

**JEFFERSON**

\*William E. (b. 1825)

Pennsylvania

\*Maria (b. 1835), white, wife

Ireland

Mary E. (b. 1859), m. Jefferson W. Marion, white,  
b. Ireland in 1834

Connecticut

**JEFFREYS**

Asa

Lyme, CT

Betsey (Morgan), wife, m. 1803

Lyme, CT

George W. (d. c. 1845)

Lyme, CT

Mary Ann (Campbell; 1805-1854), wife

Lyme, CT

George S. (b. 1831)

Lyme, CT

John M. (b. 1833), moved to New York, 1855

Lyme, CT

Harriet (b. 1835)

Lyme, CT

Richard (b. 1838)

Lyme, CT

Arthur (b. 1840)

Lyme, CT

\* lived outside neighborhood

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE**

Abby Ann, m. James Johnson, 1834	Lyme, CT
Beulah, m. Robert Huntington, 1837	Lyme, CT
John M. (b. 1833)	Lyme, CT
<b>JOHNSON</b>	
John S. (1850-1865)	Connecticut
<b>KENNARD</b>	
*Emmeline (b. 1845)	Connecticut
*Hall H. (b. 1850)	Connecticut
*William (b. 1853)	Connecticut
<b>LANE</b>	
Alicia (b. 1820), lived with Isaac Jackson	Virginia
<b>MIAMI (aka Maimi)</b>	
Menominee (b. 1835)	Pennsylvania
F.A. (b. 1840), wife	Connecticut
<b>MARSHALL</b>	
Ellen F. (b. 1862, sister of Fernando Wood)	Connecticut
<b>MARTIN</b>	
James (b. 1855) lived with Asahel Deforest	
<b>MORGAN</b>	
Charles (1807-1885), son of Japhet	Colchester, CT
*MaryAnn (Bacon; 1827-1862); m. 1827, 1 <sup>st</sup> wife	Colchester, CT
Charlotte (b. 1834), m. Edwin Cambridge, 1860	Hebron, CT
m. Henry Freeman, 1862	
*Charles C. (b. 1834)	
*Susan E.	
*Daniel C. (1845-1857)	
*Francis A. (b. 1838)	
*Gilbert (b. 1841)	
*Mary "Minnie" (b.c. 1847) m. George Robert Coe	
Nancy Ann (Worthington; 1830-1894; widow of Charles Hovey)	
m. 1866, 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife	Hebron, CT
Frank (b. 1839), lives with Asahel Deforest; Co. B, 29 <sup>th</sup> Reg.	Hebron, CT
<b>PELTON</b>	
Susan (b. 1800)	Connecticut

\* lived outside neighborhood



**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE****PETERS**

\*William (d. 1813), son of Thankful  
\*George (b. 1775)  
\*Horace (b. 1815)  
\*Harriet (b. 1844)  
John S. (b. 1833), Company D, 31<sup>st</sup> Reg't  
MaryAnn (b. 1825-1855), wife

Connecticut  
Connecticut

**RICKSON**

\*Lydia (b. 1830)  
\*Isaac (b. 1858)

Connecticut  
Connecticut

**POWERS**

\*Hammond (1801-1876)  
\*Clarissa (Lewis; d. 1867), wife, m. 1828  
    \*John B. (b. 1833)  
    \*Fanny L. (b. 1842), wife  
    \*Serg't. Alfred (1845-1907), Company E, 29<sup>th</sup> Reg't.  
    Harriet (b. 1853), da. Isaac B. Truitt, m. 1871, 1<sup>st</sup> wife  
    Emily (b. 1848), da. Isaac B. Truitt, m. 1875, 2<sup>nd</sup> wife  
    Georgianna (1838-1879), m. George O. Smith, 1873  
    \*James H. (1840-1868), Company E, 29<sup>th</sup> Reg't.  
    \*Margaret (b. 1840), wife, 1860  
        \*Mary E.  
        \*Charles E.

Lyme, CT  
Lyme, CT  
Lyme, CT  
Rhode Island  
Connecticut  
Connecticut  
Connecticut  
Connecticut  
Connecticut  
New Jersey

**ROBINSON**

Miriam (b. 1852), niece and adopted da. of Abigail Deforest  
    Enoch (b. 1879)

Connecticut  
Connecticut

**ROYSTON**

John (b. 1854)  
Elizabeth (1857-c. 1880), wife, da. Amster Dingle

Connecticut

**SEIGNOR**

Martha (b. 1847), lived with George O. Smith

Connecticut

**SEYMOUR**

Richard (1804-1876)  
Harriet, Freeman, wife, m. 1828 in Colchester  
James (b. 1843)  
Jemima (b. 1848), wife

Colchester, CT  
Colchester, CT  
New York  
New York

\* lived outside neighborhood

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE****SMITH**

George Oliver (1797-1884)	Connecticut
Orrice, 1 <sup>st</sup> wife, m. 1830	
George Oliver (b. 1830)	Connecticut
Georgianna (Powers; d. 1879), 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife,	
widow ____ Clark, m. 1873	Connecticut
William (b. 1876)	Connecticut
Burt (George, Jr.; b. 1884), adopted	Connecticut
*Thomas E. (1844-1925)	Virginia
*Minnie (Rogers; b. 1856), wife	
William B. (b. 1819), pastor A.M.E. Zion Church	Maryland

**SNIPES**

John H. (b. 1838)	Connecticut
Mary J. (b.c. 1838), wife	Connecticut
John H., Jr. (b. 1863)	New York
Hannah (b. 1834), sister of John H.	Connecticut
Susan A. (b. 1845), sister of John H., lived with Asahel Deforest	Connecticut
Mary Ann (b. 1834) lived with Asahel Deforest	Connecticut
John (b. 1833), lived with Asahel Deforest	Connecticut
George S. (b. 1838)	New York
Margaret (b. 1839), wife	Canada
George S., Jr. (b. 1858)	Connecticut
John C. (b.c. 1863)	Connecticut
Elizabeth (b. 1860), lived with Asahel Deforest	Connecticut
Susan A. (b. 1862), lived with Jane Young	New York
Ivanette (b. 1870), lived with Asahel Deforest	New York

**SPARKS**

Thomas	
Mary (b. 1859), da. Amster Dingle, wife	Connecticut
Karl D.	Connecticut

**STANTON**

Abigail (b. 1790)	Connecticut
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**SULLIVAN**

Robert (b. 1804), son of Benjamin	New London, CT
Mary (1805-1860), wife	
Robert (b. 1842)	New London, CT
Elizabeth (b. 1834), wife	New London, CT
Almira (b. 1838)	
Richard (b. 1833)	
Henry (b. 1835)	

\* lived outside neighborhood

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE**

Martha (Daniels; b. 1835), wife, m. 1858	
Elizabeth (b. 1834)	
Caroline (b. 1840)	
Mary (b. 1820)	New London, CT
Richard K. (b. 1831)	New London, CT
Sarah (Henry; b. 1824), wife	New London, CT
*Clara (b. 1833)	New London, CT
*Isabell C. (b. 1836)	New London, CT
*George G. (b. 1841)	New London, CT
*Emma M. (b. 1844)	New London, CT
*Augusta R. (b. 1846)	New London, CT
Henry P. (b. 1835)	New London, CT
Fanny M. (b. 1836), wife, m. 1858	New London, CT
Mary L. (b. 1859)	New London, CT
Josephine F. (b. 1860)	New London, CT
Louisa	New London, CT
Edward B. (b. 1863)	New London, CT
Henry P., Jr. (b. 1865)	New London, CT
*Sarah (1848-1903)	New London, CT
Arthur	
Michael	

**TRUITT**

Isaac B. (1820-1877), Company C, 31 <sup>st</sup> Reg't.	Delaware
Eliza A. (b. 1832), wife	Delaware
Mary Ann (b. 1848)	Delaware
Harriet (b. 1853), 1 <sup>st</sup> wife of Alfred Powers	Connecticut
Martha (1855)	Connecticut
Emily J. (b. 1857), 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife of Alfred Powers	Connecticut
John L. (b. 1859)	Connecticut
Sarah (b. 1860)	Connecticut

**WARMSLEY**

*Josiah (b. 1784)	Rhode Island
*Annie (1805-1863), 1 <sup>st</sup> wife	Connecticut
*George (b. 1832)	Middletown, CT
*Mary Elizabeth (Sullivan; b. 1837), wife, m. 1852	Middletown, CT
Charles (b. 1868)	Middletown, CT
Merlia (b. 1866), wife	New York
*George, Jr. (b. 1862)	Connecticut
*Horace (b. 1860)	Connecticut
*Mary (b. 1861)	Connecticut
*James (b. 1878)	Connecticut
*Herbert (b. 1880)	Connecticut

\* lived outside neighborhood

**RESIDENT****BIRTHPLACE**

\*Arthur (b. 1882)

Connecticut

\*Ella (b. 1884)

Connecticut

**WEST**

Rev. P.W. (b. 1819), A.M.E. Zion Church

Connecticut

Ellen (b. 1820), wife

Connecticut

**WILLIAM**

\*George (b. 1811)

Connecticut

\*Lydia (1815-1872)

Connecticut

\*Mary A. (b. 1804)

Connecticut

**WILLIAMS**

Rev. John (b. 1807)

St. Thomas, V.I.

**WOOD**

Rev. Fernando R. (b. 1855)

New York

Harriet (1849-1887), da. Leverett Beman

Connecticut

Louis J. (1875-1879)

Middletown, CT

Stephen B. (b. 1877)

Middletown, CT

Clarabel (b. 1880)

Middletown, CT

**WORTHINGTON**

\*Eliphalet (b. 1760), m. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sally Bohem, 1820

Connecticut

\*Eliza A. (1809-1889)

New London, CT

**YOUNG**

Charles (b. 1819)

Connecticut

Jane (b. 1825), wife, da. Phebe Daniels

Connecticut

Charlotte (b. 1850), granddaughter

Connecticut

Charles R. (b. 1856), grandson

\* lived outside neighborhood

## List of Illustrations

### Front Cover:

Upper left, portrait of Amster Dingle and his house at 170 Cross Street.

Lower left, portrait of Isaac Truitt and his house at 11 Vine Street.

Background, 1874 map, showing Beman's subdivision in the center.

All photographs taken by Janice Cunningham unless otherwise noted.  
Connecticut Historical Commission

1. Neighborhood Plot and Survey, Drawn for L.S. Beman, April 10, 1847. Map A-6, Middletown Town Clerk's Office.
2. Vine Street Streetscape, street addresses 1-3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 (left to right).
3. 9 Vine Street
4. 11 Vine Street
5. Map of Neighborhood, 1874. Reproduced from the *Beer's Atlas of Middlesex County*, 1874.
6. Map of Neighborhood, 2001. Reproduced from Middlesex Tax Assessor's Map #23.
7. 134 Cross Street
8. 146 Cross Street
9. 170 Cross Street
10. 6 Knowles Avenue
11. Portrait, Amster Dingle, courtesy of the Middlesex County Historical Society.
12. 8 Knowles Avenue
13. 10 Knowles Avenue
14. 12-14 Knowles Avenue
15. 126-128 Knowles Avenue
16. 5 Vine Street
17. 7 and 9 Vine Street
18. 11 Vine Street
19. Photograph, Isaac B. Truitt, courtesy of Wesleyan University Library, Special Collections and Archives.
20. 19 Vine Street
21. 21 Vine Street
22. 23 Vine Street

